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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1112
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE
RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3988
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1805
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 1672
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 2241
RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA 0057
RUEAWJA/DOJ WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 0824
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2669

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ASHGABAT 000855

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, EUR/ACE, INL
DUSHANBE FOR DEA
MOSCOW FOR DEA
ISLAMABAD FOR DEA
ANKARA FOR DEA
AID/W FOR EE/EA

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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: UNODC'S CASPIAN SEA INITIATIVE
MEETING PROMOTES DONOR COORDINATION

REF: A. ASHGABAT 0821
[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 0798

[1](#)1. (U) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

[1](#)2. (SBU) SUMMARY: The First Caspian Sea Initiative meeting, held in Ashgabat on June 24-26, gave Caspian littoral states a good opportunity to discuss the counternarcotics challenges their countries face. While the attendance of a Turkmen deputy prime minister at the opening conveyed the government's high-level support for the event, the country's presentation largely resembled similar presentations it made in the past. However, other countries -- Iran and Azerbaijan -- gave much more detailed presentations, complete with statistics and admissions that government statistics were inaccurate. (NOTE: Post will send a CD-Rom containing all presentations to INL. END NOTE.) A donors' roundtable held at Post following the conference led to discussion of problems that donors are facing and some possible solutions. Donors and host-government officials alike noted and appreciated the participation of an officer from DEA's Bishkek office. Post encourages DEA to continue to build its relationship with the State Counternarcotics Service through frequent visits and holding training programs in and outside of Turkmenistan, until Turkmenistan feels the level of trust necessary to undertake joint operations. END SUMMARY.

HIGH-LEVEL TURKMEN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

[1](#)3. (U) In a sign of top-level Turkmen support, Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers Maysa Yazmuhammedova opened the First International Meeting on Illicit Drug Trafficking at Sea Ports, conducted under the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's (UNODC) Paris Pact Initiative on June 24.

UNODC initially planned for the meeting to last three days, but agreed on June 20 to shorten the session to one and a half days at the government's request. Delegations from Caspian Sea Initiative member countries -- Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan -- and members of the diplomatic corps and Turkmen law-enforcement officials attended a drug burn on June 26. The conference closed later on June 26 with a discussion of the member countries' suggested improvements to the draft Caspian Sea Initiative Action Plan. (NOTE: Embassy received a CD-ROM with all powerpoint presentations and will send it to INL via pouch. END NOTE.)

¶4. (U) The action plan's strategic objectives include:

- Enhance drug- and crime-related data collection and analysis capacity in each Caspian Sea state;
- Promote drug- and crime-related information and intelligence exchanges among Caspian Sea states;
- Assist the Caspian Sea states to strengthen maritime cargo, passenger, and vessel control in sea ports; and
- Support security and stability activities by promoting a common counternarcotics agenda, law-enforcement cooperation and coordination in the Caspian Sea region.

MEMBER STATES' PRESENTATIONS: AZERBAIJAN

¶5. (SBU) During the conference, member countries and the

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Central Asian Regional Information and Coordination Centre (CARICC), UN Environmental Programme, and the World Customs Organization made presentations. The Azeri delegation admitted that the real number of drug addicts in their country is higher than official figures suggest, but did not specify the real number. The Azeris also stated that growing drug abuse in their country is the main source for HIV/AIDS transmission in Azerbaijan.

IRAN MAKES INFORMATIVE PRESENTATION, WITH STATISTICS

¶6. (SBU) A large and well-organized Iranian delegation presented plenty of statistics in its slideshow, including:

- Two million people are drug addicts in Iran, including 1.2 million regular users and 800,000 casual users;
- Just under 17,000 people are afflicted with HIV;
- Drug addicts primarily use opium, heroin, and hashish, with synthetic drug use on the rise;
- Iran spends \$1 billion annually for "supply control," including border control and interdiction.

IRAN ASKS RUSSIA FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, CLARIFICATION

¶7. (SBU) The Russian delegation admitted that its border personnel seized only a small amount of drugs imported into the country. An Iranian representative asked via which routes drugs enter Russia (besides through Iran), and the Russia delegate stated that Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan are active transit areas. Following this, an Azeri envoy said that Iran violates conventions through its attempts to extradite its citizens a month after they have been convicted of trafficking crimes.

UK TO END COUNTERNARCOTICS PROGRAMS IN TURKMENISTAN

¶8. (SBU) Following the conference's completion, the main international counternarcotics donors in Ashgabat -- UNODC, OSCE, and the UK, U.S. and Turkish Embassies -- met at a post-sponsored roundtable to discuss improving coordination

of donor activities. UK Embassy DCM George Scott announced that the UK is ceasing its counternarcotics programs in Turkmenistan because the Foreign Office has determined that narcotics sold in the UK are not trafficked through Turkmenistan. However, the UK Embassy can still support counternarcotics projects under the banner of "good governance." Scott asked for any evidence that shows that drugs trafficked through Turkmenistan end up in Great Britain to help strengthen the Embassy's case in asking for resumption of counternarcotics funds.

UNODC'S OBSERVATIONS

¶9. (SBU) UNODC's Ercan Saka said that within CARICC, Turkmenistan had largely been a receiver of information, rather than an information donor. However, he added, Turkmenistan is starting to share results. Saka encouraged donors to support Turkmenistan's drug control agency, the State Counternarcotics Service, and suggested that sending officials on study tours would support their exposure to international best practices. UNODC wants to work on a project encouraging cross-border cooperation between Afghan

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and Turkmen officials at the Imamnazar border crossing checkpoint, and is waiting to see if the State Customs Service supports the idea. UNODC is also urging Turkmenistan's State Counternarcotics Commission to release seizure data. Saka said that the Iranian delegation volunteered to host the next Caspian Sea Initiative meeting, and that some countries -- in particular, Iran -- expressed concern at this Caspian Sea Initiative meeting over sharing data with all Paris Pact partners.

OTHER DONORS EXCHANGE IMPRESSIONS

¶10. (SBU) Hakan Chengiz of the Turkish Embassy was not prepared to discuss specific training programs sponsored by the Turkish government, but agreed to furnish a list later in the interest of enhancing coordination among donors. Donors agreed that, while the State Counternarcotics Service's head seems to be willing to work with the international community, this willingness to engage does not extend to lower levels. Donors discussed possible strategies for addressing lower-level blocks, including holding a UNODC-coordinated meeting with government officials in the UN building. Saka emphasized the importance of picking out key partners in the government and encouraging them to feel a sense of ownership of their own projects. U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent William Gustafson said that although many Central Asian drug-control agencies ask for significant amounts of technical equipment, training is more important in stopping narcotics trafficking. Gustafson finds it positive that even though Turkmenistan is also asking for plenty of equipment, the government is focusing on establishing a training center as one of its primary needs, and he urged donors to support the training center (Ref A). Noting that a prison destruction that conference participants had been forced to attend (Ref B) had nothing to do with counternarcotics and stating that it had been a waste of time for Caspian Sea Initiative meeting participants to attend this event, George Scott added that Turkmenistan's officials need guidance on how to promote more positive public relations.

¶11. (SBU) COMMENT: Post recognizes DEA's disappointment that State Counternarcotics Service chief Col. Murad Islamov is more focused on equipment and training than on conducting joint investigations with the DEA. Nevertheless, we encourage DEA to continue to build its relationship with the State Counternarcotics Service through frequent visits and holding training programs in and outside of Turkmenistan, until Turkmenistan feels the level of trust necessary to undertake joint operations. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND